

11<sup>th</sup> January 2016

His Excellency Philemon Yang  
Prime Minister & Head of Government  
Republic of Cameroon

Your Excellency,

A PETITION AGAINST Mr BABA DANPULLO's ILLEGAL EXPROPRIATION OF ESU FARMLAND.

Following the recent allegations published in several newspapers by Mr Baba Ahmadou Danpullo the inhabitants of Esu hereby address this memorandum (petition) to your very high office to express the desolate cries and worries of a very peaceful people whose only need is a right to access and cultivate on their farmlands.

**Esu** community (35,000 inhabitants) is situated some 25 km from Wum, divisional headquarters of Menchum Division in the North West Region of Cameroon. The main livelihood of the population is subsistence farming, palm wine tapping, small-scale livestock rearing and micro trading (with neighbouring villages in Cameroon and Nigeria). The people are law-abiding citizens who invest most of their hard-earned wages in the education of their children and in self-reliant development initiatives such as construction of roads and bridges linking various parts of the village, classrooms, potable water schemes etc. They are known in the entire North West region for their remarkable hospitality as they welcome and treat all strangers as one of theirs. The very existence of this once very boisterous people is facing an unprecedented danger as over 200 (two hundred) people have been forcefully evicted from the land on which they have dwelled and farmed for over 6 (six) centuries. In addition the entire population is facing an illegal injunction denying them access to over 10,000 (ten thousand) hectares of farmland which has been grabbed by a single individual.

In 1986 Mr Danpullo came to Esu to ask for temporary grazing land for part of his cattle. Faithful to the Esu people's generous and hospitable disposition, HRH Joseph Meh Buh II, paramount ruler of Esu and custodian of all Esu Communal land, verbally accorded Mr Danpullo temporary grazing privileges on a few (approximately four) square kilometres at **Ibiy Wundélé** (stretch of land towards Cameroon-Nigeria borders) for his cattle. The understanding was that the Esu people will continue to carry on their subsistent farming activities plus exploitation of their raffia palm bushes in surrounding lands.

In the decades that followed, not only has Mr Danpullo violated the terms of the temporary grazing rights accorded him by HRH Joseph Meh Buh II and the Esu people, he has (through his agents including the state Gendarmerie) on several occasions harassed, brutalised, usurped and destroyed the homes and properties of the Esu people, including the forceful eviction of about 200 (two hundred) people from **Ewo** (Esu Quarter/neighbourhood adjacent to the area on which he was accorded grazing privileges).

Mr Danpullo's actions have directly impoverished the Esu people as food supply has crumbled. We have lost access to income-generating resources such as raffia palms, sandpits, stones and oil palms and the once flourishing micro commerce between the numerous Mbororo cattle herders (also forced

to leave by Mr Danpullo) and the Esu people has collapsed. It is worth noting that Mr Danpullo brings in all his supplies in huge truckloads from Douala and does not buy a single thing from the local traders.

During these years of despicable hardship the Esu people have decried this ill-treatment and in spite of their deplorable plight and systematic impoverishment resulting from Mr Danpullo's actions, the people of Esu have accepted his presence and invited him on countless occasions for peace talks, which he has repeatedly thwarted.

In June 2015, the Esu youth informed the Governor of the North West Region in writing that since State authorities and Mr Danpullo have refused to organize peaceful talks for an amicable settlement of the matter (despite numerous petitions addressed to state administrators), the population of Esu were planning to move in *en masse* to recover the land that has been grabbed by Mr Danpullo - see *table*. The Senior Divisional Officer (S.D.O.) for Menchum Division then convened a meeting with the stakeholders. During this meeting convened and chaired by, Mr. Emvoutou Bitá Benoît Williams, S.D.O of Menchum Division, in his office on 6 July 2015, the Esu people (represented by their ruler HRH Kum-à-Chuo II Kawzu Albert, George Bin Meh, Jerome Kum Fenzang, Julius Zang Zih and Julius Goh Fukem) offered Mr Danpullo the opportunity to re-locate his cattle to another stretch of land called **Kessissi** (part of Esu village land), far from the main settlement and farmlands in order to preempt farmer-grazier conflicts. Mr Danpullo vehemently rejected this rather generous/amicable offer in the presence of several State officials including Mr. Emvoutou Bitá Benoît Williams, Bekondo Brunett (Divisional Officer for Fungom) Chief of Service for Land Tenure and Chief of Service for Land Surveys, Divisional Delegate of MINEPIA, Divisional Delegate of MINIAHU, Chief of Service for State Land, Gendarmerie Commander for Wum and Frontier Police Chief for Esu, and all representatives of the Esu people present. In addition, Mr Danpullo was unable to provide any legal justification whatsoever (land title, presidential grant etc) proving his right to occupy 10'000 hectares of Esu farmlands. The meeting ended without a final decision but the S.D.O. invited both parties to explore further avenues for an amicable solution.

Instead of continuing the dialogue, Mr Danpullo sought to impose an *ultra vires* injunction banning the Esu population from "trespassing" on "their" land. The authorities followed this up by arresting and detaining four Esu youth leaders. Two thousand Esu people marched (on foot) to the Senior Divisional Office in Wum and organized a sit-in until the youths were released.

Today, Mr Danpullo has illegally annexed and occupied over 400 (four hundred) -times the size of the patch of land he was allowed to graze on, and thereby depriving the Esu people of their basic source of food and income (raffia palm bushes, arable lands, sandy river banks, etc.) with total impunity.

In spite of the fact that there is an ongoing litigation on this farmland and to further prove his disregard for Economic and social rights, Mr Danpullo erected a wooden fence around the land thereby blocking access to the sandpit on the banks of River Imieh. This sandpit was until now the only other source of income for the Esu people (given that Mr Danpullo has confiscated their arable farmland) and also source of sand for their own construction purposes. Mr Danpullo's agents only accepted to tear down the fence following the intervention of the D.O. of Fungom and the Gendarmerie Company Commandant of Wum.

Mr Danpullo was visibly unperturbed by this as he went ahead to start constructing yet another building on the disputed land. The Esu people decided once again to seek redress by addressing a petition on November 5 2015 to the DO of Fugom (copy to SDO Menchum) requesting that all

construction work on the disputed land be suspended until the court delivers a final verdict / ruling on the litigation. We never received a reply to this petition nor any form of reaction from the authorities.

He then went ahead and wrote a complaint to the presidency in an attempt to side-step the Governor of the North-West Lele Lafrique and local officials. The government referred him back to the North-West authorities. As a result the Governor led a site visit to the disputed land for the first time in 30 years.

On December 29 2015, during the visit and working session convened and chaired by the Governor of the North West Region, the SDO for Menchum publicly told Mr Danpullo that he has no legal document granting him ownership of 10'000 hectares of land in Esu. Mr Danpullo flared up and publicly warned the SDO that he (Danpullo) has powers and is well connected and can make the SDO pay for those utterances. During the same visit Mr Danpullo threatened Esu people in the presence of the Governor, Prosecutor General of the North-West and other senior administrative and judicial authorities.

Here is a list of the petitions that the Esu people have submitted to administrative authorities for the past 30 years and we have not received any meaningful assistance in resolving the matter as amicably as we wish.

Date	Author	Receiver	Subject
10 Oct. 1987	All Esu Quarter Heads	Governor of North West Province	Petition with regard to the Allocation of Land to Mr. Danpullo
30 June 1993	Esu Population	S.D.O. Menchum	Petition with regard to the Allocation of Land to Mr. Danpullo
20 Nov. 1997	Esu Population	Governor of North West Province	Acquisition of Land by Mr. Danpullo
04 March 2001	Esu evicted inhabitants of some Quarters	Governor of North West Province	Forceful eviction and destruction of homes and farmlands
11 March 2001	ECUDA (Esu Cultural and Development Association)	Prime Minister	Forceful eviction and destruction of homes and farmlands
07 July 2001	ECUDA (Esu Cultural and Development Association)	S.D.O. Menchum	Forceful eviction and destruction of homes and farmlands
07 June 2015	Esu Youths	Governor North West Region	Reclamation of illegally occupied farmland
05 Nov. 2015	The People of Esu	Divisional Officer Fungom	Request to stop all construction work at Wundeley (Esu).

Your Excellency, to sum it all up

- Mr Danpullo was shown about 5 sq km in 1986 to graze his cattle. Now he illegally occupies 75% of Esu land.
- Elba Ranch has invaded and occupied Esu land without following land laws
- Esu people have followed administrative procedures for 30 years and the administration has not done anything to resolve the problem. They don't even acknowledge receipt of petitions.
- But as soon as Mr Danpullo wrote one petition the administration has responded by coming to Esu to try and look into the problem.
- Esu people are law abiding because for 30 years despite all abuses from BAD they have not attacked his properties or workers.
- For 30 years Mr Danpullo has failed to negotiate with the Esu people. The reason is that he wants to take over all of Esu and make it exclusive Elba Ranch property like Ndawara.
- Mr Danpullo instead took the Fon of Esu to court in order to obtain exclusive access to the land he is illegally occupying.
- Esu people proposed that he moves his cattle to an area more convenient for grazing but he refused in the presence of all administrative and judicial authorities at the Menchum SDO's office in June 2015.
- Mr Danpullo leaves Esu with no alternative as he wants all the land or nothing – this is unacceptable.
- Esu people need their land for present and future generations and one person cannot claim 75% of the village. No individual in Cameroon has been given all the land at the expense of 35,000 people.
- Mr Danpullo has threatened confrontation in his petition to President Biya published in newspapers.
- He also threatened Esu people in the presence of the Governor, Prosecutor General of the North-West and other senior administrative and judicial authorities on 29 December 2015.
- Mr Danpullo is therefore responsible for anything that happens to Esu people.
- The way ahead is for Mr Danpullo to accept the offer by Esu to move his cattle (which are not in paddocks) to an appropriate place.
- Esu people will never hand over their village to one person for commercial ranching.
- Esu people in Cameroon and all over the world like one man agree that their village cannot be handed to one business man no matter how rich.

Sir, the people of Esu have full trust in your high office as well as in Cameroon's courts of law. We therefore invite you to use your competence to listen to the cries and deplorable situation of an entire community of 35'000 inhabitants and settle this matter once and for all.

Thank you for your understanding and we look forward to your prompt intervention.

Yours sincerely

Esu inhabitants